INTRODUCTION

621 patterns of adjustment with the outside world and the degree of
184 influence and prestige in the wider rural community that any attempt to combine them would be tantamount to overlooking significant sociological facts. The residents of the large villages look upon themselves as the leaders of the rural community, regarding those from smaller villages as a little less civilized and those from small hamlets as rustics. The man from the smaller village is suspicious and critical about the ways of the people from bigger villages, but he has in his heart of hearts an admiration and respect for them. To him also the people living in still smaller settlements
[476] appear to be rather crude and rustic. As the division of labour in
[463] the community is governed to a very great extent by traditional caste occupations, and co-operative labour of a number of different castes is required not only for agricultural activities, but also for socio-religious life, the large village, having within its population all the occupational castes, has a comparatively more integrated and self-sufficient economic and socio-religious life than the smaller villages, which, in the absence of one or more occupational castes, may have to depend on some other settlement. Because of its multi-caste constitution, larger population and greater complexity of internal problems, the organization of the larger village is often remarkably different from that of smaller villages. In fact, some of the smaller villages and hamlets come to be regarded as appendages of the larger villages, and although they have considerable autonomy in domestic matters they are very greatly influenced by the views and preferences of their larger neighbour.

The ethnic and linguistic composition of a village, as well as its caste constitution, also determines its character. The structure, ethos and problems of a wholly tribal village will be very different from those of a village with a mixed or homogeneous population. A tribal village is often unitary in respect of its authority structure, the tribal authority itself being supreme in secular, ritual and cultural village matters. On the other hand, in the case of a village which has a mixed population of tribes on the one hand and Hindu castes on the other, or of two different groups of parallel Hindu castes separated from each other by the fact that they speak different languages and belong to different culture-areas, or of Hindus and Muslims, the nature of its internal organization and authority is bound to be different. If the diverse elements of its population have equal strength—numerical as well as economic—

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ing that they too will have their share after the crops are harvested. Thus, the potter periodically supplies the agriculturist with earthenware and pots for his normal requirements. The barber does the hair-cutting and shaving of the members of the agriculturist's family on this basis. The washerman, too, follows this rule in so far as established cultivators of the village are concerned.

(ii) Obligations to render some occupational services, to the agriculturists as well as to many non-agriculturists, having a bearing on their socio-religious life. Castes such as the barber, the washerman, the carpenter and the potter, and the Madiga have definite functions in the rites and ceremonies connected with the major crises of life. These are performed by them as a matter of routine, without any direct negotiations regarding the wages that they may expect in return for their services. Convention has fixed the basic minimum, and in the course of ritual duties, at different points, a part of this payment has to be made. Depending on their status and financial position, people pay something more for these services at the completion of the ceremony.

(iii) Obligations to render some occupational services to other occupational castes in return for their traditional services. As an example, it may be pointed out that a barber will attend to the grooming of hair and shaving of the members of a weaver's family to which he is attached. No cash payment is either expected or made. However, every year the weaver will give him a few yards of cloth and possibly a *sari* or two for his wife.

(iv) Occupational services rendered with an expectation of cash payment in return for the work. Casual visitors to the village can get the services of the barber only when they pay cash. For making a bullock cart, or for preparing timber for use in the construction of a house, a carpenter would first settle his wages and then undertake to do the work. In this respect he would not make an exception even in the case of established cultivators to whose households his family may have been attached for several years, even for decades. The Vaddar stone-workers also usually undertake an assignment only when the obligations on both sides are settled.

For most of the castes economic dealings falling in category (iv), described above, are of a casual nature, though their economic returns through them may be quite substantial. With a few exceptions, most of the castes have to accept a basis of reciprocity in

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476 discharge of their functions. Tradition approves of such an arrangement, and mutual trust and inter-dependence ensure its continuity. Where this arrangement is accepted, a system of attachment of some families to certain other families naturally [433] follows. Agriculture being the most important activity of the countryside, the number of agriculturists is naturally the largest in the village population. These constitute the bulk of those who require and accept the occupational services of small caste groups offering them. Even the occupational castes stand in need of one another's services, although the number of families from each caste offering them within a village community is of necessity small. Each family will, therefore, attach itself to a number of families in the village and offer them services both in agricultural pursuits and socio-religious rites and ceremonies. Among the occupational castes themselves also there is a system of family attachments in operation. In Shamirpet some family affiliations date back to the time of the foundation of the village. Later immigrants either secured the services of some of the established families of the occupational castes, or they made arrangements with some of the newcomers to the village belonging to those castes.

476 623 626 This sytem is both complex and delicate. It is not easy for an agriculturist to remove a family attached to his household and secure the services of another. For example, A, a barber, is attached to the family of B, an agriculturist. If for any reason B is greatly dissatisfied with the services of A and wants those of another, he cannot abruptly dismiss A. His difficulty will not be in dismissing him, but in finding a substitute. Each of these castes [467] has its own inter-village council. Occupational castes have a developed trade unionism, and their code of professional ethics and etiquette too is very rigid. The dismissed person will be protected by this professional etiquette. No one else would be willing to act as a substitute, for fear of being penalized by the caste *panchayat*. It may even be difficult for a number of families to join together and import a family belonging to that occupational caste from a different village. First, under these conditions of tension, an outside family would not come for fear of social pressure and ultimate ostracism for such an action. And if they do come, the caste fellows already in the village will make things very difficult, even unbearable, for them. In the course of our investigations,

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

we recorded three cases of protracted antagonism between a group of employing families and the occupational caste families employed. In one of them the dissatisfied employer agreed to retain the family on its promise of doing better work in the future. In another the caste people arrived at an amicable settlement by attaching another family to the employer, and attaching the dismissed caste member to a newly-settled family in the village. The third one dragged on for a little less than four years, and, yielding to the pressure and persuasion of the village elders, the caste agreed to give a substitute. The employer in this case was a hot-headed farmer, but he was a man of some wealth and considerable influence, and as such he could secure the effective intervention of the village elders in his own favour.

According to our informants 'the system to-day is not what it was a decade or two ago'. Many attribute this change to the spirit of individualism which is now manifesting itself in several walks of life in the countryside, and is bringing about changes in the established patterns of life. 'In former times,' said an agriculturist, 'these low classes knew their position and behaved themselves well. If they worked satisfactorily they were treated by us very well. In fact, with the passage of time, our relations became more and more intimate. I remember those days when a barber's son would come into the courtyard, offer salutations to us and say "Uncle, the headman has called you" or "Mother, the ceremony in the neighbour's house is about to start and they are awaiting you." In many cases they were just like the members of our family, and although both parties maintained the traditional caste distance, we could always take each other into confidence even on matters of a delicate nature. But now things have changed. Those boys don't want to work here. They want to go to the city. They are not satisfied with the traditional arrangements of payment; and so there is difficulty.' However, the system still continues more or less in its established, traditional form. Urban contacts, education or attraction of something better or more lucrative, may distract a young man, causing him to refuse to replace his old or deceased father's services with a family to which they were attached, but one of his poorer and less ambitious brothers or cousins will always be willing to take up the work.

We shall now examine the main economic functions and activities of the major caste groups in the village.

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the shopkeeper and are willing to pay slightly higher prices. They advance money to the people for buying bullocks and agricultural implements. A mortgage is not insisted upon in all cases, but the rate of compound interest which they charge is often exorbitant. The Komtis also advance seed grain to the people. For this, too, they charge a heavy interest. Loans are often taken by people against the mortgage of land or a part of the crops, depending upon the sum of money which they borrow. In Shamirpet the Komtis seem to be the only caste whose monopoly has been seriously affected by the change of times. To-day Shamirpet has in all thirteen shops. If we do not take into account some of the petty shops, four of these belong to Komtis, two to Muslims, two to Toddy-tappers and one to a goldsmith. Even in the field of advancing cash and seeds for agricultural purposes, the Komtis have to face the competition of some of the comparatively rich Reddi and Muslim cultivators.

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THE KUMMARI

In Shamirpet there are five families of potters, with fourteen people actually working at the wheel. Each family is attached to some agriculturists in the village, and it periodically supplies them with a certain number of earthen pots for domestic use. Every two or three years they also supply the agriculturists with large baked earthen bins for storing grain. For this they do not expect a cash price. At the time of harvesting the potter visits the fields of the family to which he is attached, and is given *bheek-bali*, that is his share of the new crop. The quantity of grain that is given away depends on the size of the land cultivated, and also partly on the owner's financial circumstances. On the occasion of rituals connected with birth, marriage or death a supply of new pots is expected from him. Tradition has prescribed the minimum payment required for these services, although on happy occasions people often give a little more. If he can arrive at an agreement with the other occupational castes, such as the barber, the washerman and the weaver, he will offer them his services in return for their occupational services to his family. The details are fixed by the parties concerned, and often considerable haggling and making of charges and counter-charges against one another go on. Notwithstanding this, the system works quite satisfactorily, for out of forty-four cases of such mutual arrangements studied very

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323 564 closely at Shamirpet only in six were the relations finally broken off on account of dissatisfaction to either or both parties. Non-agriculturists and such occupational castes as do not have arrangements with the potter buy their requirements from him for a cash price. The Kummari families of Shamirpet have more clients and customers in some of the neighbouring villages which have no potters' families living in them.

THE GOLLA

[361] 233 564 476 The shepherds occupy a block of their own in the village. Some of them cultivate small land-holdings, but the major source of livelihood for all of them is their traditional occupation of keeping herds of goats and sheep. They may keep one or two cows and buffaloes besides these herds which are their livelihood. They have an elaborate lore regarding these animals, and they are experts in caring for quite large herds. They train country dogs to help them in this, and with their aid prevent the goats from going [782] astray when they are taken out for grazing in the forest. By turns the Golla families in the village contribute goats or sheep for sacrifice in the village ceremonies. For this they are not paid. With this exception, they carry on all other transactions with the village people in cash. When people buy goats and sheep, the owner of the animal is always paid in cash. For goat's milk they expect spot payment, but arrangements for weekly or monthly payments may be made in the case of regular buyers. However, in one respect they may also enter into an agreement with the agriculturists which may entitle them to a small share of each harvest. After the harvest, when all the crops have been reaped, the agriculturists ask the Gollas to graze their herds on their fields and keep them penned in during the night. As there is very little fodder in the fields, the shepherds take the goats and sheep out for grazing in the nearby forest, and during the night keep them in the field. [241] The urine and dung of the herd is believed to be good manure, and as such this service is much in demand by the agriculturists. The shepherds often fix days with the agriculturists, and each one has his turn only on a limited number of days. According to the nature of agreement between the cultivators and the shepherds, the payment is either in cash or the latter collect their dues from the fields at the time of harvesting.

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ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

THE SALE

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The Sale consider themselves superior to the other artisan castes. Nowadays they no longer work on the basis of affiliation to the village agriculturists. According to an old informant, 'In the good old days when the Sale used to spin their thread in addition to weaving cloth, they also entered into a definite arrangement with the agriculturists, as most castes do to-day. They supplied us with a certain length of cloth every year, and in return we gave them some grain at each harvest. But now times have changed. They buy yarn manufactured in the mills, weave fancy cloth and sell it for cash.' The weavers have now practically abandoned the traditional system. Only with certain occupational castes do they arrive at a working arrangement under which, in return for their services, they give them an agreed length of cloth. In the course of our investigations we found that such arrangements existed between weavers on the one hand, and potters, barbers and washermen on the other.

THE GAONDLA

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The villagers in this area are very fond of *sendi*, or fermented palm juice. The Gaondla shops are the centre of attraction in the evenings for men—young and old—as well as for many middle-aged and old women. This caste has the monopoly of tapping the different kinds of palm trees, and also of selling the fermented juice, and has admirably succeeded in maintaining it, notwithstanding the introduction of the system by which government leases trees to the highest bidders irrespective of their caste. In Shamirpet, so far, there has been no challenge to their monopoly; although occasionally the Madigas and other poor people steal juice from the pots tied to the trees by the Gaondlas. The Gaondlas first mark out the trees to be tapped, then actually tap them in the afternoons and evenings, and tie pots at the points where each tree has been tapped to collect the dripping juice. Early next morning they go round to these trees again, climb up, and bring back to the village all the juice collected during the night. This is kept by them in large earthen pots and retailed to customers on demand, expecially in the afternoon and in the evening. One of the Gaondla families in the village has a government contract for other liquors and intoxicants. In addition to the fermented palm juice, that shop also sells several other varieties of liquor obtained from distilleries

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stay at home. The middle-aged people have in effect the controlling hand in village affairs; the truly aged retire into insignificance and fade away. Some people cannot become reconciled to such retirement, having enjoyed authority and influence during their active days. They find adjustment difficult, and a life of dependence rather trying. But most people accept their position with good grace, leave active management of the home and family occupations to their sons and consequently find that their adjustment is much less difficult and inconvenient.

3. CO-OPERATION AND CONFLICT

Within the village community there is an appreciable degree of inter-caste and inter-family co-operation. Earlier it has been pointed out that the social system enjoins co-operation between a number of castes in the fields of economics and ritual. Several aspects of community life depend for their smooth running on this traditional system of mutual give and take. Apart from these conventional ties which are a constituent part of the social structure, several relationships involving voluntary co-operation can be observed. The simplest type of such voluntary co-operation found between neighbours or between friendly families is the system of 'accommodating' each other in time of need. Borrowing little sums of money or small quantities of grain, cooking for a friend during her menstrual impurity or confinement, and looking after children during the short absence of the mother may be cited as examples of this type of co-operation. House building and annual roof repairs also call for the help of friendly neighbours among the peasants of average and poor economic status. Careful mental note is made of all such favours received, so that they may be returned at the appropriate time. Refusing help and returning favours inadequately are looked upon as gestures of unfriendliness or as marks of 'a small heart'. Emergency aid is rushed to friend and foe alike. In cases of serious illness, fire or other accidents it is necessary to help a fellow villager; and in all such cases aid is rarely refused. Socio-religious ceremonies, particularly marriage, and those connected with death, are also important occasions that demand co-operation and help from neighbours and fellow villagers. The burden of the household in which the ceremony is to be performed is considerably lightened because of the help

LIVING TOGETHER

476 571 given by friends and neighbours. The average and poor peasants extend this co-operation to the sphere of economic activities also, particularly during weeding and harvesting their families help each other in the speedy completion of the work. Among the occupational castes, families of a specific caste-group are expected to accommodate each other during time of illness, difficulty or temporary incapacity, by lending manual or monetary assistance to them for continuing their vocational craft. Fairs and ceremonies organized by the village reveal the co-operative spirit in the community. On some such occasions, one faction or other may refuse co-operation—sometimes it may even cause obstructions and create difficulties, but on the whole it can be said that organizers have the enthusiastic support of the bulk of the community and dissidents tend to lose the sympathy of wavering camp followers. In inter-village quarrels as well as on all such occasions that demand vindicating the honour of the village, the residents of the settlement often act with spirited unison. Behind most forms of voluntary co-operation there are no social sanctions; but the general attitude of society regards them as desirable and necessary. In the words of an informant, 'Who can say that he will not require help from anyone at any time? Money can buy many things. Power too can get many things done. But there are several situations in which neither money nor power helps. When you require sympathy and help your neighbours come forward.' To quote another informant, 'To-day you are well; to-morrow you may be very seriously ill and it may not be possible for you to get a doctor. What saves your life? A cheap herbal concoction suggested by your neighbour! One can never know how and when one is going to need the help of another.' Finally to quote a third informant, 'To-day I need your help; to-morrow you may want it from me. Why do we live in a village? Why do we not live in the wilderness? Only because we cannot do without human sympathy and occasional help.' Rendering help at the time of need is of value in itself. It partially relieves the distress of the person receiving help; and gives a psychological satisfaction to the person giving it, who incidentally also gains some social prestige through it.

578 But I do not want this picture of co-operation to be too idyllic, for conflicts and tensions in the community are also numerous. The analysis of the quality of inter-personal relations in the community,